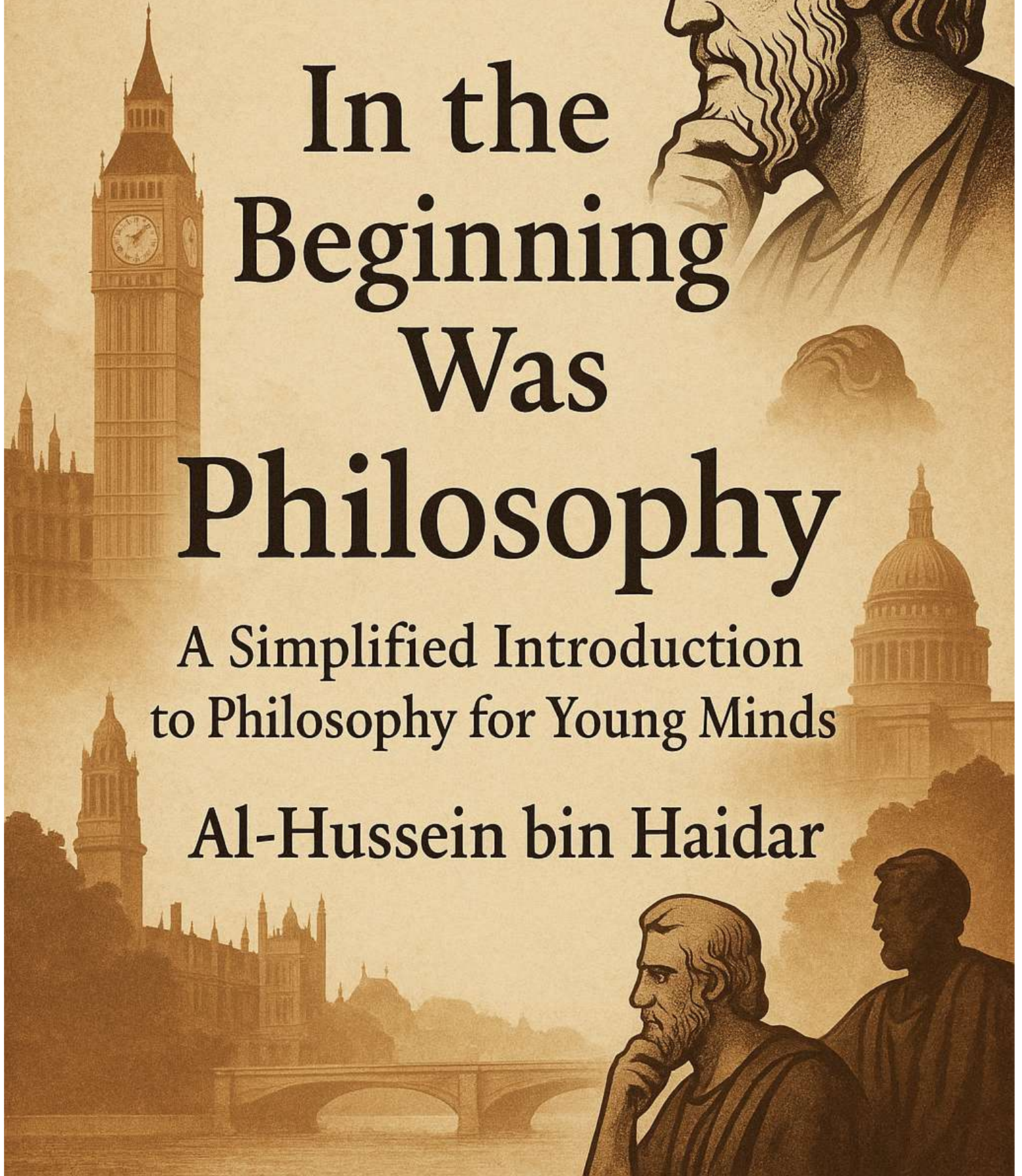


In the Beginning Was Philosophy

A Simplified Introduction
to Philosophy for Young Minds

Al-Hussein bin Haidar



IN THE BEGINNING WAS PHILOSOPHY

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AUTHOR: AL-HUSSEIN BIN HAIDAR

**THE PHILOSOPHER KNOWS HOW PEOPLE OUGHT
TO LIVE.**

— Plato the Wise

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

The child emerges from his mother's womb into the vast expanse of this world—estranged and crying. It is precisely at this moment that philosophy begins. His journey toward knowing everything starts by turning back to his mother, to her breast for nourishment, and simultaneously to ask himself fundamental questions: From where have I come? Who brought me into existence? Who am I? Who is this woman? What is this world I have entered? And what is my ultimate destiny?

He begins to hear sounds around him, perceives light and colors—distinguishing pleasant scents from unpleasant ones, delighting in the former and recoiling from the latter. He observes, explores, constructs conceptual frameworks, seeks evidence, and makes judgments. The journey of wonder and discovery continues with him throughout life, unless it is hindered by some internal or external obstacle during the various stages of his existence, or unless philosophical deviation redirects him away from true philosophy and the upright path.

A child is born a philosopher—posing abundant questions due to his compelling desire to understand the world and its entities. This drive is sparked by

wonder or doubt, seeking to understand existence and his place within it. He remains a philosopher so long as he encounters a sage who responds aptly; otherwise, his sense of wonder dulls, and his pursuit of perfection withers.

This unending questioning—this relentless inquiry—is philosophy. Philosophy is the continuous act of questioning. It is an instinct embedded in all aspects of existence. As the philosopher al-Fārābī said: “There is nothing in the universe in which philosophy does not play a role, to which it does not direct purpose, or from which it does not draw knowledge within the limits of human capacity.”

No one has repudiated philosophy more than one who is ignorant of it. Indeed, humanity has passed through eras in which philosophy was renounced and labeled sophistry, leading to collective bewilderment, intellectual poverty, and moral confusion. This is to be expected when reason is marginalized or declared null.

And indeed, as the adage goes: “He who is ignorant of something, naturally opposes it.” The cause of this rejection is either the failure to understand the thoughts and terminology of the philosophers, or the inability to distinguish between true philosophy and the divergent schools that branched from its original course.

There is no room today for repudiating philosophy, for the world is governed by philosophical schools of thought—there is no escaping philosophy! It is the lifeline in this age, where atheism and materialism abound. No philosophy can be confronted except with another philosophy—philosophy itself is the response to philosophy.

Many books have been written to introduce philosophy to non-specialists, but a great number of them adopt an approach that is inaccessible, while others target advanced academic students. On the other hand, some texts warn against philosophy altogether, and public platforms have incited opposition toward it.

Thus, today's youth are caught between two obstacles. This book was therefore written for the novice learner, to clarify the principles of philosophy and the landmarks of wisdom in a simple and accessible style. It provides young people with a clear conception of philosophy and helps launch their journey into understanding themselves and the world around them—especially in the age of modernity.

I am keen that the emerging generation take hold of a portion of this deep and refreshing sea, hoping it may cleanse them from the filth of ignorance or quench their intellectual thirst.

PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy is a rational science that investigates the principles and causes of things. It has both a general and a specific definition. In its general sense, philosophy refers to all rational sciences in contrast to the transmitted or traditional sciences. Hence, it is often referred to as the "mother of sciences" and the gateway to all branches of knowledge. Every science depends on philosophy for the validation of its subject matter, whereas philosophy itself does not rely on any other science to validate its subject. This is what renders philosophy the noblest of all sciences—indeed, the most distinguished in every respect. In its specific sense, philosophy is the science that studies the states of being insofar as it is being.¹ In reality, the definition of philosophy varies among philosophers: what the metaphysical philosopher might accept, the empiricist might reject, and the Marxist might refute both. Nevertheless, things are often understood and clarified by their opposites. In this light, philosophy stands in opposition to sophistry.

¹ Philosophy, in its specific sense, is the science that investigates the states of being insofar as it is being. By "being," they refer to everything that exists; and by "insofar as it is being," they mean the aspect that all beings share in common—namely, existence itself. It does not concern itself with what is particular to a given entity or its individual characteristics.

Philosophy upholds realism and seeks truths, whereas sophistry denies realism and deals merely in disputations, fallacies, and obstinate argumentation. Thus, nothing better demonstrates the merit of philosophy than its contrast with sophistry.

Etymologically, the word “philosophy” derives from the Greek term *Philosophia*, meaning the love, pursuit, and cultivation of wisdom. Some Islamic sages referred to it as "divine wisdom." Wisdom, in this context, is defined as the human ability to distinguish truth from illusion. This sheds some light on what philosophy means, even if the sophist may refuse to accept it.

In any case, the intellect or reason is the fundamental source of knowledge in philosophy. Philosophy entails raising meaningful and beneficial questions prompted by reason and thought, and offering likewise rational, beneficial responses. These questions are unending; indeed, one question often leads to a thousand more.

Philosophy addresses questions about being qua being—that is, being in its most absolute and general sense. It examines essential attributes and common elements shared among all beings. Other sciences, by contrast, focus on particulars and specific domains. Their subject is restricted being: for example, natural sciences investigate being as corporeal, and

mathematics examines being as quantity. Thus, no science apart from philosophy provides a comprehensive understanding of existence.

Therefore, philosophy is not a science with an external goal, nor is it merely an instrumental science subordinate to others; rather, it is the ultimate aim of all sciences.

Philosophy is traditionally divided into two major branches: theoretical and practical. Theoretical wisdom deals with objects of knowledge that are beyond human control or volition. Practical wisdom, on the other hand, addresses human actions that fall within one's capacity and agency.²

In sum, philosophy encompasses two fundamental dimensions:

1. A contemplative and exploratory dimension—this is theoretical philosophy.
2. An applied dimension involving implementable philosophical doctrines—this is practical philosophy, often referred to as ideology.

Fields like value theory and epistemology include both theoretical and practical aspects.

² Theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom are both connected to the theoretical intellect. However, the theoretical intellect and the practical intellect are two distinct faculties.

THE PHILOSOPHER

A philosopher is one who adopts the methodological path of philosophers in all intellectual dimensions, comprehends their terminology, lives the questions and issues of his time, and roams freely with his thought in this vast existence.

As for the theologians who have delved into the realms of philosophy according to their own approach, they are referred to as *mutakallimūn* (dialectical theologians) and are not described as philosophers. The clearest example is Al-Ghazālī, the Islamic *mutakallim*. Their domain is *‘ilm al-kalām* (the science of theology), which differs from philosophy in its manner of inquiry and treatment of issues. The terminology of this science is also distinct from that of the philosophers, which is why the philosophers have often rejected the theologians.

The conflict that occurred between Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Rushd (Averroes) is, therefore, a conflict between a theologian and a philosopher—not between a philosopher and another philosopher. Some, however, have regarded Al-Ghazālī as a philosopher because he thought in philosophical terms in some matters, or because he initially adopted the philosophical method and approach before ultimately turning against it.

Thus, the true philosopher is the one who possesses the philosophical spirit. What, then, are the characteristics of this spirit?

1) ****Methodological Doubt or Critical Thinking****:³

A philosopher does not blindly follow the ideas of others, nor is he, on the other hand, a mere rebel for rebellion's sake. It is true that among the philosophers, we find both those who have been overly compliant and those who have stubbornly rejected the views of others. However, the true philosopher is distinguished by his independence from all external influences, coupled with rational discernment. His sole concern is the pursuit of truth and reality as they are.

The philosopher adopts the method of doubt—not as an end in itself, but as a means to reach truth and objective reality. He distances himself from dogmatic certainty and absolute judgments. Methodological doubt, then, is not skepticism in the destructive sense, but a rational and deliberate strategy to probe and question assumptions in order to uncover what is genuinely real and valid.

³ Methodological doubt was adopted by al-Ghazālī, drawing from the tradition of the Muslim theologians (mutakallimūn), and he established it as a scientific method for attaining certainty. René Descartes later employed the same approach. There is, however, a significant distinction between methodological scientific doubt and the sophistical doubts of the skeptics, as well as the pathological doubts of the mentally unstable.

2) ****Methodical Thinking****:

The philosopher is not satisfied with superficial thought, simplistic reflection, or narrow perspective. Rather, he employs reason, depth, comprehensiveness, analysis, synthesis, critique, and immersion in thought and contemplation. Philosophy is characterized by holistic inquiry, though it does not neglect particulars; for the universal does not negate the particular but rather defines and completes it.

3) ****Questioning and Answering****:

In philosophy, questions are more important than answers. The philosophical mind questions every phenomenon, every event—asking what, how, and how much—seeking the essence of all things.

4) ****Detachment from Emotions and Prejudgments****:

Rational deliberation is a defining trait of the philosopher. He approaches inquiry free from emotional bias and preemptive judgments.

5) ****Abstraction****:

Abstraction is an intellectual process in which the human mind isolates a quality or relation from time, space, and matter, focusing thought upon it alone. The concrete is the opposite of the abstract; it is that which is defined in place, time, or matter—namely, the

perceptible.

6) ****Flexibility and Rejection of Dogmatism**:**

The philosopher avoids rigidity and absolute assertions, except in matters of certainty and established axioms.

ثورة الفلسفة

****"The Philosophical Revolution: An Intellectual Awakening from Neglect to Awareness"****

Philosophy arises from events that deeply move and affect the human being, awakening him from intellectual apathy or mental stagnation and guiding him toward light and the vastness of existence. Man possesses an innate certainty of his own existence, from which he sets out to explore other certainties that lie beyond the self—through contemplation, reflection, and inquiry. The extent of one's engagement with philosophy is proportionate to the number of motivating causes, and the quality of that engagement is shaped by the depth and nature of those causes.

These philosophical catalysts can be outlined in the following points:

1. Wonder:

Wonder is a fundamental impulse that accompanies the human being from the moment of birth until the end of life. As soon as a person enters the world, wonder begins to stir within him. He seeks to understand

himself, the nature of existence, and his ultimate fate and destination. Hence, he asks: "From where did I come?"

The role of the philosopher, with respect to himself, is to engage in deep contemplation until wonder settles and gives way to clarity. With respect to others, his duty is to dispel their confusion through teaching and explanation. He must not, like the sophists or certain pretentious philosophers, become a source of bewilderment and disorientation—those who, out of arrogance, imagined they could legislate universal truths and deviate from divine and natural laws. Such a tendency was, in fact, embraced by Western modernity.

2. **Methodological Epistemological Doubt:**

Systematic doubt aimed at uncovering the foundations of knowledge.

3. **The Call of Conscience:**

This is the divine inner voice embedded in every human soul. It was this call that stirred the philosophical impulse among the ancient Greek philosophers, motivating them to challenge the sophists.

4. **The Innate Human Pursuit of Perfection:**

This is a persistent instinct. Man's desire for continuity and survival emerges when he becomes certain of his

own mortality. When he realizes that he will inevitably die, he yearns for an unbroken connection with the eternal Being—God. Therefore, he asks: “Where am I going?” For when one comes to know God's perfection, majesty, greatness, glory, beauty, power, and might, he is driven to attain a knowledge of God that is eternal and unfading.

5. **The Experience of Misery and Existential Confusion:**

This inner turmoil acts as a powerful trigger for philosophical reflection. An individual, burdened by suffering, begins to question: What is the source of my misery? Why do I feel lost? What underlies my confusion? And where lies deliverance? Such questions give rise to an intellectual upheaval that drives one to examine the reality of the self. As this introspective journey deepens, the mind expands, reaching toward broader dimensions of understanding. Through contemplation, the afflicted individual comes to recognize that philosophy offers not only a pathway to inner clarity, but also a means of reclaiming one's full humanity.

*****THE PHILOSOPHICAL UNITY OF THOUGHT*****

The Unity of Philosophy: A Universal Discipline Beyond Time, Place, and Culture

It is established that philosophy is an innate disposition and instinct, and that true philosophy is a single, unified science shared by all religions and nations, among all human beings. It does not vary according to time or place, nor is it confined to either. Philosophy is the discovery of what the universe contains—of things, laws, and constants deposited therein by God. As for doctrines and views that deviate from the true path, they are attributed to their proponents, not to genuine philosophy...

The true philosophical thought is what we refer to simply and absolutely as "philosophy." As for particular or individual philosophical ideas, we attribute them to their originator and associate them with him personally. Thus, we say, "the philosophy of so-and-so," or we qualify them with a descriptor, such as "pessimistic philosophy" or "American philosophy."

True philosophy is one; it is the central path that corresponds with reality as it is. This path is necessarily aligned with truth. The various philosophical schools, conflicting doctrines, and mutual refutations among thinkers often arise due to

influences of time, place, religious background, or political systems. The essence of such disagreements lies in the failure to practice abstraction—both in thought and in pursuit of truth. Each philosopher proceeds from his own worldview without detachment...

These anomalies and dogmatisms are, in general, false—though not without some detail that may contain elements of wisdom. What ultimately resolves these disputes is epistemology or the philosophy of knowledge. As such, philosophy does not admit of abrogation, nor is it subject to change or alteration. In reality, the disputes among philosophers are not without benefit. From the clash of their ideas arise insights, notions, and concepts. Greek philosophy distinguished itself and spread widely because of its confrontation with the sophists, who had ascended to the highest positions in Greek society, succumbed to arrogance, and adopted fallacious reasoning as a way of life ⁴. They denied the realities of things, belittled people, and assumed an excessive sense of superiority.

⁴ Philosophy has existed in all civilizations and societies, both ancient and modern—such as Indian philosophy, Chinese philosophy, and Persian (Pahlavi) philosophy. Even during the same historical period as Greek philosophy, Confucianism was flourishing.

In response, the wise philosophers arose—those who had freed themselves from the chains of tradition. Their philosophy was purified from impurities and cultural accretions. They spread wisdom among the people; their students preserved it through documentation. Elevated in thought and contemplation, they began with the First Cause. From this lofty metaphysical principle, they cast their philosophy like a thunderbolt upon the heads of the sophists, striking them down. They brought wisdom from the heavens ...⁵

A conscious revolution was thus set in motion—one that began to transform the world and spread knowledge and awareness across the inhabited earth. This marked the beginning of a new phase that prepared the way for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus. Yet, following his time, Christianity spread under the doctrine of the Trinity, a concept fundamentally at

⁵ One of the leaders of communism once declared: “We have brought philosophy down from heaven to earth,” by which he meant the rejection of divine science—ontology—and a focus instead on philosophy concerned with the human condition. In antiquity, it was similarly said that the sage Socrates brought philosophy down from heaven to earth, meaning that he would walk among the common people in the marketplaces, feigning ignorance in order to admonish them through the method of “irony and maieutics.” By posing questions, he would either lead them to recognize the error of their thinking or, if they responded incorrectly, he would critique their answers and reveal the flaw in their reasoning. Sophistry had become a widespread social phenomenon, and through his wisdom, Socrates redirected people toward rationality and brought philosophy into every household.

odds with philosophy. As a result, emperors began to suppress philosophical inquiry, casting Europe into a prolonged era of darkness later termed by Western historians as the Middle Ages.

These historical shifts also foreshadowed the advent of the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad. In the two centuries leading up to his birth, the world was engulfed in deep confusion and existential uncertainty. Historical accounts speak of individuals and communities wandering in pursuit of a knowledge that might deliver them from the oppressive realities of their time. It was an age marked by intense political, religious, and ideological turmoil.

Hence, we understand why al-Fārābī composed his treatise **The Harmonization of the Views of the Two Sages**. He believed that philosophy is one science, and that the disagreements among the students of Plato (d. 347 BCE) and Aristotle (d. 322 BCE) were a result of partisanship and divergence. In fact, the supposed disagreement between the two sages on some issues is largely illusory, not real.

Indeed, true philosophy does not contradict Islam or theology. What opposes theology are the specific philosophical doctrines and ideologies attributed to individuals, which are called “philosophy” only in the sense that their proponents adopted the methods of

reason and intellectual inquiry in their contemplations—even if their conclusions were flawed or divorced from reality.

Muslims, in truth, contributed to philosophy with remarkable creativity. Yet ironically, many Muslims today undervalue this legacy and rarely acknowledge it in their modern writings.

To sum up, it is true that philosophy is characterized by individuality and creativity; nevertheless, we firmly maintain that philosophy, in its essence, is one and unchanging.

THE BENEFIT OF PHILOSOPHY

- 1) Man, by his very nature, tends toward the pursuit of knowledge. He possesses an innate passion for uncovering truths as they are, and for grasping reality as it truly exists. It is in his disposition to abstract truths and realities from illusions and conventions.
- 2) Knowledge of God, whom philosophers refer to as the First Cause—beyond which there is no further cause, as it is the terminus of the chain of existents. Philosophy must lead us to a conclusion that marks the end of inquiry: the affirmation of divine unity (tawḥīd). Polytheism is not a possibility within true philosophy. Yes, some philosophers were atheists, but only because they despised metaphysical inquiry, rejected it, and approached philosophy in a fragmented manner, not through its proper gate...
- 3) Deepening one's understanding of existence and rejecting superficial or spontaneous thinking. One cannot truly comprehend the self except through a comprehensive view of existence. Philosophy is thus a form of mental discipline and strengthens intellectual faculties.
- 4) Establishing the subject matter of all other sciences. Philosophy benefits from the results of other sciences

and utilizes them in forming its own theories and in affirming the truths to which it arrives.

5) Affirming the validity and universality of scientific laws—laws that are not partial but absolute: the law of identity, the law of causality, the law of non-contradiction, and the law of the impossibility of circularity and infinite regress.

6) Attaining knowledge of the ultimate causes of things and their primary principles.

7) Abandoning philosophy is like entering a battle without a weapon. The world today is governed by philosophical doctrines and ideologies—whether they align with truth or not. Humanity presently lives in an age of modernity imposed by global powers as if it were a divine universal law, manifesting in economic, political, social, scientific, and cultural forms. This is a fallacy that philosophical methodology exposes and that epistemology categorically rejects.

As Dr. Mohammed Sabila states in the introduction to his book **Orbits of Modernity**: “Philosophy is not merely swimming in the sky of abstract concepts, nor is it confined to reflections on great notions such as reason, freedom, or destiny. It is also an openness to reality, in order to understand and comprehend its components and directions.”

THE METHOD OF PHILOSOPHERS

The method employed by philosophers to understand existence is the rational method. It consists of organizing known premises in order to reach unknown truths. This is the syllogism whose premises are demonstrative, not dialectical or rhetorical. The result derived from such syllogism is a certain conclusion—certain in the strictest sense, that is, a firm conviction in agreement with reality.

The philosopher begins with the self—his own conscience. He must believe in the principle of realism: that he exists within a real and existent world, and that his rational faculties are capable of understanding this reality as it is and of perceiving its boundaries and features.

From here, the philosopher embarks on his journey through the vast cosmos with freedom, realism, and objectivity. This is the method of the wise, in contrast to the sophists, whose philosophy is fundamentally anti-realist.⁶

⁶ Anti-realism may be either ontological or epistemological. Ontological anti-realism denies the existence of a reality that is actualized either in the mind or outside of it. Epistemological anti-realism, on the other hand, does not necessarily deny the existence of external reality, but its adherents reject the mind's capacity to comprehend that reality or to grasp its features with any certainty.

Some theological philosophers, however, rely on inner spiritual insight or intuition, which mystics refer to as unveiling (kashf), direct witnessing (‘iyān), or what philosophers more broadly call gnosis.

****THE MAJOR BRANCHES OF PHILOSOPHY****

Philosophy encompasses several major sciences, or what may be termed as grand thematic domains. These central branches are:

- 1) Metaphysics (the study of being)
- 2) Epistemology or the Philosophy of Knowledge (the study of knowledge)
- 3) Axiology or the Philosophy of Values (the study of values)

Some philosophers extend these domains by incorporating additional fields such as the philosophy of law and legislation, the philosophy of religion, the philosophy of history, political philosophy, and other human sciences. Therefore, we refer to the aforementioned as “major branches” because others exist that are also explored by philosophers.

METAPHYSICS

Metaphysics, also known as theology, first philosophy, higher philosophy, or the philosophy of the divine, is understood by the sages as the science of being as such, in its most general and comprehensive sense.⁷ This discipline investigates apparent things to uncover their foundational principles and primary causes.

The metaphysician asks: What lies beyond the sensible, physical world perceived through our senses? He investigates whether a particular entity exists or not. In contrast, what is called “lower philosophy” pertains to the natural sciences, which concern themselves with the states and properties of bodies—such as physics and chemistry—without addressing whether a thing exists in reality.

Mathematics occupies an intermediate position between these two philosophies. The subject of mathematics—number—is an abstract entity, though what it quantifies may be material. Both natural philosophy and mathematics study specific, particular

⁷ Aristotle had established this field and referred to it as “metaphysics,” by which he originally meant the book that comes after his first work titled *Physics*. However, later philosophers interpreted this discipline in a way that reflects its actual subject matter: the study of being as being—that is, the investigation of metaphysical realities that transcend the physical, sensible world.

existence; however, mathematics is closer to metaphysics due to the abstract nature of number.

Hence, knowledge of God in the strictest sense can only be achieved through the inquiries of this discipline. Through metaphysics, one also comes to understand other intelligible matters, such as the intellect, space and time, life and death, the afterlife and its implications, prophethood and revelation, fate and destiny, determinism and free will.

Metaphysics also explores the existence of all beings: angels, humans, animals, plants, and inanimate objects. It examines love, anxiety, laughter, weeping, and more. Among the questions this branch of philosophy addresses are: How did existence come into being? Is being one or multiple? Is being a cause or an effect? What is the cause of being? Is being eternal or contingent? What is the necessary being, and what is the possible being?

As for the afterlife, metaphysics asks whether the resurrection is physical or purely spiritual.

This branch of philosophy is often what is meant when the term “philosophy” is used in a general sense, because it is the most significant area of inquiry. It is the gateway to all other philosophical domains, which

is why it is called “first philosophy.” It forms the trunk from which the rest of philosophical branches grow, for metaphysics is the science of being, and everything else is woven into this fabric of being.

However, materialist philosophers and atheists rejected metaphysics entirely. They viewed it as a kind of madness or futility devoid of purpose. What they failed to recognize is that through epistemology, one can determine whether metaphysics has a real foundation or is merely illusion.

Metaphysics also addresses what lies beyond philosophical psychology and delves into parapsychology, including phenomena such as telepathy, clairvoyance, extraordinary medical abilities, psychokinesis, and the sixth sense.

From this expansive range of topics, we can identify the primary domains of metaphysical inquiry as:

1) Theology

2) Ontology (the theory of being)

3) Cosmology (the study of the cosmos)

4) Psychology in its various forms: existential, meta-psychological, intellectual, and parapsychological.⁸

⁸ There is a distinction between these various branches of psychology. Philosophical psychology is a theoretical science that investigates the essence of

When we examine the subjects addressed by metaphysical philosophy, we realize that it is characterized by difficulty—precisely because of the generality and simplicity of its problems. It is a philosophy that relies solely on reason, not on sense or experience. However, this does not mean that it is disconnected from other sciences and fields of knowledge. On the contrary, metaphysics permeates all disciplines, for it distinguishes between mere appearances and ultimate reality.

You might ask yourself: isn't this a difficult task? The answer is yes—it is indeed a difficult, intellectually delicate, demanding, and rigorous endeavor. And precisely because of this, many people have turned away from it. Therefore, it is the philosopher's task to question everything in order to understand everything—and then to convey that understanding to others in an accessible manner.

Ancient philosophy is known for its existential orientation; it concerned itself with the inquiry into the

the soul and its qualitative dimension. In contrast, empirical psychology—often referred to as mental psychology—deals with the quantitative dimension of the soul, that is, human actions and behavioral phenomena; this field comprises multiple sub-disciplines. Parallel psychology (*parapsychology*), on the other hand, focuses on anomalous phenomena that lie outside the scope of the other two fields and encompasses a variety of topics.

principle from which existence emanated and the ultimate destiny to which it returns. Some later philosophers unified metaphysics and ontology. In fact, divine philosophy—“metaphysics”—and the philosophy of being—“ontology”—have come to signify one another.

The term “divine philosophy” (ilāhiyyāt) refers to the inquiry into absolute being in its broadest sense. It is not limited to the Necessary Being—God Almighty—but rather investigates being and all existents. It is called “divine” as a form of honorific designation. In the more specific sense, however, it refers to the science that investigates the Necessary Being, i.e., the Divine Essence.

As for the conclusions reached by metaphysical philosophy, they are transferred to the field of Islamic creed (‘aqīdah) or theology (tawhīd) to determine what is required to be believed from among them. At that point, the scholar of sacred law articulates those conclusions using terminology distinct from that of the philosopher, and in expressions rooted in the language of revelation rather than philosophical abstraction.

EPISTEMOLOGY / THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

After completing metaphysical and ontological inquiry, the human being turns to contemplate the self and its capacities in an attempt to understand both self and reality as it truly is. Both ontology and epistemology are branches of metaphysics. Every philosophy of a science has both an ontological and an epistemological aspect. The latter is addressed by epistemology, while the former baffled the sophists, materialist philosophers, and atheists—though they could not fully reject it as they did pure metaphysics. Epistemology begins where sophistry ends. The sophists sowed doubt in everything, to the extent that they even questioned the capabilities of the human mind ⁹. In response, wise philosophers rose to the defense of humanity and established the foundations of epistemology, which, in modern times, has come to supplant all branches of philosophy and now stands at the forefront. Today, it is philosophy, and it is wisdom—its backbone. Every philosophical discipline

⁹ A clear distinction must be made between methodological scientific doubt and epistemological doubt. The type of doubt espoused by the Sophists is epistemological in nature, as it targets the very foundations of certainty and the possibility of attaining true knowledge.

is examined through this theory. Every science has its own philosophy.

Hence, epistemology is a science that examines the nature of every field of human knowledge, its possibility, conditions, sources, value, boundaries, and the validity of the tools of knowledge that lead to a correct understanding of reality. It assesses whether these tools are reason, sense perception, or intuition. It seeks criteria for truth and falsehood and studies the nature of each science.

Epistemology differs from logic, which studies the formal laws of human reasoning, and from the specific sciences that study particular kinds of knowledge. Epistemology, by contrast, studies knowledge in general. Questions in this field include: What are the sources of knowledge? Can human faculties comprehend everything, or are there limits? What is the nature of human knowledge? What is the relationship between the knowing subject and the known object?

Philosophers have differed on the source of knowledge: is it pure reason, reason and senses, or intuition alone? Most have agreed that epistemology relies on pure reason, as the senses can be deceptive. Hence, they prioritized reason. However, different schools of philosophy emerged, each with its own

approach:

1. Rational Method:

- This is the pure philosophical school, which asserts that knowledge is acquired through pure reason alone.
- Sub-schools:

a. Peripatetic School (Aristotelian Rationalism):

Founded by Aristotle, followed by al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, and others in the Islamic tradition, and Descartes and Spinoza in Europe.

b. Existential Philosophy:

The school of existential philosophy focuses exclusively on human existence, without delving into the nature of existence in general. It examines the individual's relationship with others and with the universe.

c. Mystical Philosophical School:

Combines intellectual reasoning with inner purification and intuition. Leading figures include Plato, Ibn Arabi, and Henri Bergson. Offshoots:

- **Illuminationist School (Suhrawardi)**
- **Transcendent Philosophy (Mulla Sadra)**

2. Empirical Method:

- Known as positivism or empiricism, this school holds that knowledge is based on sense experience and experiment. Key figures: Democritus, Epicurus, John

Locke, David Hume, Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, and Herbert Spencer.

3. Transmission Method:

- This school relies on prophetic texts. What is narrated from prophets is taken as truth, especially in hadith, but subjected to rational and Qur'anic scrutiny.

4. Dialectical Materialism:

- Pursues a new worldly future, aligning with pragmatism. Key figures: Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, John Dewey. They saw utility as the measure of truth and dismissed metaphysics as unhelpful.

Philosophers have disagreed on whether human beings can know everything. Sophists said no, while scientific skeptics and dogmatic realists said yes¹⁰.

¹⁰ Dogmatism, or doctrinal absolutism, manifests in multiple forms: there is ideological or doctrinal fanaticism, intellectual rigidity, and the refusal to retract a position even when evidence or rational proof demonstrates its falsehood—alongside a rejection of dialogue or open discussion.

AXIOLOGY: THE PHILOSOPHY OF VALUES

Axiology, or the philosophy of values, is a field of philosophical inquiry that relies on rational analysis. It investigates everything that holds value or significance, treating such values as ends in themselves rather than as means to achieve other ends. Just as humans have an ontological nature, they also possess an axiological one; by nature, humans seek perfection. Hence, man is a valuing and evaluative being. Through intellectual, spiritual, and moral perfection, freedom, happiness, and peace are realized. But what is the nature of this value? What are its criteria?

The judgments issued by the sciences in this domain are evaluative, and this branch of philosophy explores the relationship between values, knowledge, and thinking. It encompasses three major values: truth, beauty, and goodness. Each of these values constitutes a large and independent philosophical domain. Thus, we must briefly address each one:

1. LOGIC (VALUE OF TRUTH)

Logic is the science that safeguards thought from error and deviation. It establishes the rules and laws of sound thinking for individuals and societies and requires rational faculties to adhere to them. The benefit of logic lies in its ability to develop the faculty of correct reasoning, as it explores the operations of thought as they ought to be in relation to their intended purposes¹¹. Aristotle was the first to systematize this science academically, naming it "Analytics."

Logic derives its material solely from reason and sets forth the rules of sound thinking, which is the prerequisite for all accurate conclusions. As such, it is the foundation of all sciences and the most exalted among them, serving as the introduction to all human knowledge. Logic differs from epistemology in that it assesses the procedures of reasoning in terms of validity, while epistemology delves into the very nature of truth and error.

Logic consists of three branches:

First: Semantics and Concepts — students learn about words and their meanings, concepts, and the types of

¹¹ In this respect, it differs from psychology, which examines mental processes as they are, focusing on both correct and flawed thinking in order to identify the factors that lead to cognitive error.

definitions.

Second: Judgments — students examine propositions and their various kinds.

Third: Syllogism — students study arguments, proofs, and their classifications.

It is evident that logic should be studied by every individual, and even the general public should gain a basic grasp of it. Logic protects individuals from delusions and falsehoods and serves as a shield against sophistry and fallacious reasoning. Moreover, it enables individuals to convince others of correct opinions, thereby benefiting society — as seen in wise poets and moral preachers who refute sophists and ideologues.

Those who oppose logic often do so due to preconceived ideological commitments that prevent them from acknowledging its value.¹²

Logic enables us to achieve two primary goals:
1. Recognizing things, thereby achieving intellectual integration with the sciences.

¹² Ideology refers to the set of ideas, principles, and policies that directly govern human behavior. It may manifest as a religious, economic, or social phenomenon—or as a composite of multiple such dimensions. An ideology may be specific to a particular place, influencing those within a defined context, or to a particular time period, shaping the worldview and behavior of people within a given historical era.

2. Reasoning about things, leading to practical integration.

In the modern era, logic has evolved into two main directions:

1. Formal Logic — characterized by general rules applicable to all subjects without specialization. It is called "formal" or "structural" because it pertains to the form of science, not its content. This is the traditional logic.

2. Applied Logic — or material logic, which has rules tailored to specific disciplines and research methods. Scientific inquiry demands that ideas conform precisely to real events and phenomena.

Symbolic logic replaces language with symbols, akin to what is done in mathematics. Thus, it is also called mathematical logic or logical algebra.

As you can see, philosophers have not infused their personal views into logic because it leaves no room for opinions or biases. However, in aesthetics and ethics, some have found more leeway to mix philosophy with their personal inclinations — a reason why those unfamiliar with philosophy may be repelled by it.

2 - AESTHETICS PHILOSOPHY

Just as philosophy is concerned with knowledge, it also engages with the arts and everything that stems from human experience or feeling. It addresses human reality from all aspects. One of the clearest indications of this is the philosophical focus on aesthetic value. Although the branches of philosophy vary in significance, they complement one another. The value of beauty is the subject of Aesthetics, the science that identifies the standards of beauty in artistic works such as poetry, music, painting, sculpture, theater, and architecture.

What is the nature of beauty?

When can we declare something to be beautiful, and why is it considered so?

Is beauty sensory, intellectual, or emotional?

Does beauty lie within the object itself or only in our minds?

Is natural beauty superior to artificial beauty?

Are they on the same level, or is beauty found in a combination of the two?

These are many questions. Therefore, aesthetics or the philosophy of art deals with beauty in terms of theory, creativity, and critique. It enables individuals to issue

evaluative judgments in distinguishing between the beautiful and the ugly. It also determines the role of beauty and art in human life. Art is a human phenomenon worthy of study and contemplation. The thinker first imagines beauty, then feels it, and finally judges it.

Philosophers have various schools of thought regarding the source of aesthetic judgment:

1. Reason: Proponents believe that beauty can only be grasped through rational laws—beauty is a rational value.

2. The Senses: Adherents claim that beauty lies in the object itself.

3. Emotion: Advocates argue that aesthetic value is perceived when our emotions are stirred. It does not reside in the object itself, nor in our minds or senses, but in the relationship between us and the object being judged. Aesthetics is thus a sentiment evoked by the beautiful. Judgment in this case is based on emotion and art, not logic or science.

Beauty can be either natural or artificial. Raw nature is beautiful—its beauty is unmatched and has inspired every artist. However, it gains aesthetic value in human work only when shaped into an artistic form with elements of the artist's creativity, thus acquiring a living beauty, or a soul and freedom.

It was once said: "The sweetest poetry is the most false," referring to exaggeration and imagination—not contradiction of ethics and virtues. Artistic work requires creative imagination to be considered beautiful. If an artwork mirrors reality exactly, it loses its beauty. The standard of truth in science differs from that in the arts. Science aims for objectivity and discovering truth, while art seeks to express beauty and stir admiration.

Nonetheless, aesthetic value depends on several characteristics:

- 1) Imagination must be grounded in reality, as pure fantasy is often delusional and signals a disorder in the artist.
- 2) The artistic work must be purposeful and organized.
- 3) Aesthetic value must adhere to moral values and higher ideals—anything immoral lacks aesthetic value due to the ontological connection between beauty and goodness.

These aspects indicate aesthetic awareness among the sound-minded. Others, however, argue that aesthetic value does not depend on morality. To them, anything that evokes a pleasant emotion is deemed beautiful—"art for art's sake." However, we hold that anything violating moral bounds is not truly beautiful; such a judgment would stem from base or predatory desires.

Thus, the theory of "art for society" should prevail.

Though we believe beauty must conform to moral values, we acknowledge that people have varying tastes and perceptions. Their debates in this field are extensive. Nonetheless, philosophy holds the ultimate authority in eliminating human confusion. Any immoral art is akin to an immoral act—it incites confusion, which in turn stirs philosophical reflection.

Immanuel Kant (d. 1804), in his book *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (*Kritik der Urteilkraft*), *sought to* establish a theory of beauty that is independent of personal taste or practical utility. Indeed, he identified four principles of aesthetic judgment, as mentioned:

Quality (Qualität):

Beauty is not related to utility or practical purpose; rather, it produces a pure pleasure—that is, it pleases us without us seeking anything from it.

Quantity (Quantität):

Beauty transcends individuality; when we describe something as beautiful, we implicitly assume that others ought to agree with us. Aesthetic judgment aspires to universality, even if it is not objective.

Relation (Relation):

Beauty is a “purposiveness without purpose” (*Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck*).

In other words, the object appears as if it were made for a purpose, as if it were precisely organized, yet without having any specific external end.

Modality (Modalität):

Aesthetic judgment carries a kind of subjective necessity: when one experiences something as beautiful, one feels that others **should** share in that feeling, even if that necessity is not logical but rather emotional.

In summary, Kant intended to argue that beauty does not reside in the object itself, nor in our desire for it, but in the manner of our perception—through the “free play” between the faculties of understanding and imagination. Beauty, in his view, is an internal experience with a universal character.

It is worth noting that Aesthetics is divided into two main areas:

1. Theoretical Aesthetics: This normative section analyzes the feeling of beauty psychologically and interprets beauty philosophically.
2. Practical Aesthetics: This involves art criticism. Each art form—poetry, literature, visual arts, theater—has its own critics and connoisseurs.

3. PHILOSOPHY OF ETHICS (ETHICS)

The concept of goodness is the central theme of Ethics or the science of manners, as it identifies what is considered good and bad in human behavior. It establishes the principles of will and conduct, setting boundaries for an individual's interaction with both themselves and others. This is why some have described this science as the logic of behavior—this being its core function. For a person to achieve happiness, they must understand their obligations toward themselves and others. Ethical values directly concern behavior and possess a social character that regulates the relationship between the individual and society. They also define what a person ought to be, rather than what they are. Thus, ethics is one of the primary goals for philosophers and mystics, with some regarding it as the ultimate aim of philosophy itself. This is because the human subject of this science is inherently moral, and their existence is defined by their relationship with these values.

The goal of moral philosophers is to investigate the soul concerning refinement, discipline, and the pursuit of perfection. The perfection sought in this field is moral perfection. As for metaphysical perfection, it is

purely a matter of divine selection—God chooses whom He wills for prophethood and messengership. This type of perfection is explored by philosophers under metaphysics and is distinct from the moral perfection addressed in ethics. However, metaphysical perfection entails and necessitates moral excellence. God's metaphysical and ontological perfection cannot be compared to any created being, making the phrase “Perfection belongs to God” a logical and ontological fallacy when used to excuse human error.

Ethics has two main aspects, like other branches of axiology: a theoretical normative aspect—considered a science because it sets and explains principles, whether theological or secular—and a practical aspect regarded as an art that deduces results from principles and applies them to various human actions.

The theoretical aspect discusses topics such as moral good and evil, truth, freedom¹³, and responsibility. Intuitionists among philosophers believe that this is a normative science, with deductive methodology. They claim moral goodness is intuitive, subject to universal laws unaffected by time and space, ultimately tied to

¹³ The problem of good and evil is examined in philosophy through two primary dimensions: (1) by metaphysical-theological philosophers within the framework of metaphysics, and (2) by moral philosophers within the domain of moral philosophy. Both dimensions also address related topics such as the doctrine of divine providence and the question of the devil.

divine decree according to most. Others attributed it to the nature of human actions. Immanuel Kant argued that the standard of goodness is the human practical reason, which he called the “principle of duty” in his philosophy.

In contrast, teleologists and empiricists argued that this is not a normative science. They claimed that good and evil are social constructs derived from human experiences. Among these, the Epicureans asserted that pleasure is the ultimate measure of human action, a view adopted by modern utilitarians.

Another branch of these teleologists believed in energy or vitality as the standard, splitting into altruistic energy, where good serves society, and egoistic energy, led by Friedrich Nietzsche (d. 1900), advocating that individuals assert themselves, with survival of the fittest as the rule. Each of these philosophical directions had followers who formalized and projected these ideas onto modern societies.

Empiricists do not classify ethics as a normative science. For them, its method is inductive, and its goal is merely to describe human behavior in a specific time and place, without prescribing what ought to be. Some even excluded ethics from other scientific disciplines.

It is indisputable that humans have the ability to control their emotions and actions through free will, neither wholly constrained nor entirely autonomous. A moral person refrains from evil and chooses good. Without free will, praise and blame would be meaningless.

Laws are either natural or moral. Natural laws include divine norms and the inherent properties in nature, covering logical and physical laws. Moral laws govern free will and are either divinely revealed or man-made (civil, commercial, administrative law), organizing social life. There is also a specific natural moral law innate to humans.

Good and evil are known through two sources: the internal source (divine conscience within every human) and the external source (the small society—family—and the large society—civil institutions), each possessing a collective conscience that guides behavior through customs and traditions. Philosophers reflect upon these practical moralities, theorizing and formalizing them into normative ethics.

Ultimately, the moral philosopher carries a great responsibility: to guide individuals and societies away from moral decay, especially in the modern age. Their task is to clarify virtuous values so individuals and

societies adopt noble conduct, and to warn against vices. However, materialists and deniers of the afterlife will not accept this philosophy unless it is rooted in theological premises. Ethics, like other branches of axiology, is an end in itself and complements the other philosophical disciplines. A philosopher without ethics is of no use. Ethics was formerly known as political science, as reflected in the books “Politics” by Avicenna and Al-Farabi. It is also known as the science of duty.

SUFISM AND PHILOSOPHY

It is necessary to discuss the relationship between Sufism and philosophy, as both remain obscure and ambiguous to most people. In fact, many have attempted to disparage both by labeling them as mythical or superstitious disciplines. Indeed, the behavior of some philosophers and most Sufis has unfortunately served as a justification for such criticisms, contributing significantly to the confusion and misrepresentation surrounding both domains.

The truth, however, is that the relationship between Sufism and philosophy is intimate. Sufism, like philosophy, is derived from the Greek word *Sophia*, meaning "wisdom." All alternative interpretations of the origin of "Sufism" that try to portray it as a purely Islamic phenomenon are, in reality, misleading attempts to grant it religious legitimacy among initially skeptical audiences. Without doubt, Muslims did eventually mold Sufism into a form that reflects Islamic creativity and spirituality.

Therefore, true Sufism — the one under discussion here — is essentially a form of philosophizing. Its focus, however, lies in renouncing worldly attachments and engaging in the greater struggle (*jihad al-akbar*) of the self in order to attain the knowledge of

God, the Absolute Truth. In this path, the Divine Essence (al-dhāt al-ilāhiyya) is the central subject. This spiritual struggle involves two fundamental aspects: purification (takhliyah) — the abandonment of vices, flaws, and excessive desires — and adornment (taḥliyah) — the cultivation of virtues, noble morals, and praiseworthy character traits. This is a disciplined training of the soul, without the monastic isolation commonly found in other traditions.

There are several schools of Sufism, which share certain fundamental principles, and they can be classified as follows:

1. Philosophical Sufism

This school adopts the methods of philosophical contemplation, and its discourse closely resembles that of philosophers. It is often referred to as theoretical Sufism, blending devotion with metaphysical inquiry. Among the most prominent figures are Ibn Arabi (known as al-Shaykh al-Akbar), Suhrawardi (Shaykh al-Ishrāq), and Mullā Ṣadrā. This school is considered universal across time, place, religion, and denomination.

2. Theological Sufism (Kalam-based)¹⁴

¹⁴ The term derives from *‘ilm al-kalām* (scholastic theology), whose practitioners—the *mutakallimūn*—constitute various theological schools characterized predominantly by a dialectical method. They construct rational principles which

Often labeled practical Sufism, this school is frequently confused with philosophical Sufism. Its adherents, while deeply spiritual, adopt theological terminology and focus on ethics, moral discipline, and refined conduct. This school is predominantly found among Sunni Muslims (Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l-Jamā'ah), and from it emerged numerous sub-schools — some formed around minor doctrinal distinctions or unique spiritual practices.

3. **Ascetic Sufism (Zuhd-based)**

Many prominent early Sufis fall under this category. They renounced both philosophy and speculative theology (kalam), choosing instead a simple life of spiritual detachment. They emphasized personal piety and inner purification without engaging in formal philosophical or theological debates. Their approach was experiential rather than discursive — "concerned with the state (ḥāl), not with words." This school is perhaps the earliest historically, with diverse motivations for its practitioners.

4. **Pseudo-Sufism (Degenerate or Opportunistic)**

they claim correspond to the apparent meanings of scriptural texts, though not necessarily to the deeper truths grasped through contemplation and reflection by those firmly grounded in knowledge.

This group emerged from theological Sufism and includes charlatans who exploited Sufi symbolism for personal gain. They claim Sufism without adhering to its principles, lacking both philosophical depth and spiritual rigor. Their motives often include financial manipulation, false claims of knowledge or lineage, and deception of the masses. They have unfortunately become a major argument used by critics to attack both philosophical and theological Sufis. However, these cases are best addressed in the fields of psychology and sociology, not philosophy.

Theologically-inclined Sufis differ from philosophers in method but share with them the ultimate goal: reaching the Truth — i.e., God. As for **philosophical Sufis**, their discipline closely resembles metaphysics (i.e., 'ilm al-ilāhiyyāt). Their aim is to imitate the Divine (tashabbuh bi-llāh) within the limits of human capacity: speaking truthfully, holding sound beliefs, avoiding error, embodying noble ethics, performing virtuous actions, and perfecting their craft.

They often subscribe to **theories such as** Wahdat al-Wujūd (Unity of Being) and Fanā' fī-llāh (Annihilation in God). These theories, though widely debated, have been interpreted in various ways even

among Sufi philosophers themselves, let alone by their followers. The concept of Unity of Being has triggered considerable theological and philosophical controversy, especially in Islamic contexts. Sufis' occasional mystical expressions (*shataḥāt*) are sometimes misunderstood — often because they have not disengaged from sectarian or theological constraints, unlike philosophers who maintain strict neutrality.

Sufism, like philosophy, is not bound to a specific era or region. It exists across all nations, sects, and religions. At its core, it is **a form of wisdom** — and the ultimate purpose of wisdom is to attain Truth, i.e., God. The supreme function of philosophy is to distinguish **realities as they truly are** from illusions and conventions.

The key distinction between **Sufis and philosophers** lies in their epistemic approach to knowing God. The philosopher seeks to know God through reasoned proofs and intellectual arguments. The Sufi, on the other hand, seeks to perceive and experience God through internal transformation. The Sufi strives to embody divine attributes, such that God's names and qualities are reflected in the self — hence, one becomes "a knower of God" (*‘ārif bi-llāh*). When a person combines both approaches — rational inquiry

and spiritual experience — they attain the highest and most complete form of knowledge.

‘**Irfān** (gnosis) is the experiential knowledge of God. It is not acquired through logic or empirical observation but through the heart (qalb). It has both a theoretical and a practical dimension:

- Theoretical: Philosophical reflection on being (wujūd) and the path to God.
- Practical: Knowledge of the spiritual stations and steps toward God — involving self-purification (mujāhadah), ethical discipline (takhliyah), and moral adornment (taḥliyah), culminating in the station of iḥsān (spiritual excellence), known as the state of mushāhadah (witnessing God as though one sees Him).

It is important to distinguish between **"Unity of Witnessing" (Wahdat al-Shuhūd)** and **"Unity of Being" (Wahdat al-Wujūd)** — they are not the same, and conflating them has led to many misinterpretations.

PHILOSOPHY AND THE FINAL CHAPTER

We shall present the history of philosophy in Europe in parallel with its broader human history, in order to uncover the true causes that led philosophical inquiry to its current state, and likewise, to understand the condition into which the world as a whole has fallen—inasmuch as the present age is, in reality, the age of globalization, or the age of modernity, or the age of European thought, or indeed, the era of triviality and barbarism.

After the era of the Greek philosophers and the advent of Jesus Christ (peace be upon him), Europe entered into an age that its own historians have described as the Dark Ages—and rightly so—for the Middle Ages were the worst period Europe ever experienced, and they are what brought it to the current state we witness today. From there, the entire world was dyed with the European temperament and character. The primary cause of this was the theological conflict over the nature of Christ, in which the followers of Christ's divine nature triumphed over the Arian Unitarians. Moreover, the Catholic Church in Europe feared the incursion of any Christian doctrine that opposed its own ideology—especially the Orthodox ideology of Constantinople, with which it was in constant conflict. As a result, it began to combat every science, theory,

or idea that contradicted its views, and philosophy was at the top of that list—for philosophy, by its very nature, cannot coexist with the association of partners with God, and it requires the use of reason and contemplation without neglect. to dominate the European scene and imposed its authority upon the peoples of Europe, who were originally migrant peoples of Turkic or Mongolic origin, whose influx continued from before the time of Christ up until the seventh century CE under mysterious circumstances whose causes remain unknown to historians and have proven elusive even to philosophers of history.

What adds to the astonishment is that these migrating peoples adhered to Arianism—that is, to monotheism—and considered Christ to be a human being sent by God. Yet, their mode of life was primitive, so much so that the ancient Europeans described them as barbarians. With the absence of philosophy, the Church filled the vacuum, and Christianity spread with the doctrine of the Trinity, displacing Arianism.

This gave rise to the Frankish kingdoms, the Gothic kingdoms, and those of the Vandals, the Huns, the Bulgars, the Germanic tribes, the Anglo-Saxons, and other barbarian migrant peoples. The feudal system

continued as it had under the Romans prior to the barbarian invasions. In the modern era, this same system became the point of departure for the philosophies of socialism and communism, leading eventually to the Bolshevik revolution and the global ideological divide—with capitalism rising in opposition.

Envy then crept into those kingdoms, and wars of competition and inheritance erupted among them—conflicts that did not subside until the modern era, following the First and Second World Wars. Europe spent its entire medieval period embroiled in unceasing conflict, layered in darkness upon darkness: the darkness of ignorance, poverty, feudal oppression, slavery, and a religious ideology so unstable it could not be reconciled with the detached philosophical mind.

Gustave Le Bon wrote: “History falters in explaining how the Roman world came to embrace Christianity within two or three centuries.¹⁵ It is clear that this religion appealed to slaves, for it made them equal to their masters—but should it not have seemed utterly

¹⁵ Philosophy of History - Gustave Le Bon 64, In reality, the Roman world was unable to confront the great influx of migrations coming from the lands of the Turks, and the doctrine of these immigrant peoples was either monotheistic Arianism or paganism, as in the story of European historians, and the influence was for the Church, which imposed its word and took control of the Arians.

repugnant to those masters, whose social order it upended?” All explanations for such a monumental historical shift have remained devoid of value until now; thus, it has become necessary to turn to the principles of modern psychology to understand it.

Throughout its medieval era, Europe remained in a state of chronic tension and inflammation. We have previously enumerated the factors that awaken philosophy within the human being: wonder and astonishment, doubt, misery and confusion, the call of conscience, and the innate philosophical instinct—all of which converged in European societies. These conflicts became more entangled after the fall of Constantinople, rendering them insoluble. The force of rational enlightenment intersected with the continual conflicts among the aristocratic classes themselves. Adding to this was the intense yearning for social justice among the poor and laboring masses—a desire that burned deeply within them.

Thus, this revolution was directed at both the Church and the aristocracy. The medieval age had turned the European continent into a bundle of high-explosive dynamite tubes—lacking only a spark. And yes, that spark did come, and the explosion occurred in successive waves that took on multiple forms, namely:

1. The Conquest of Constantinople in 1453 by the Muslims and its consequences.

This event was the root of all causes and the long-awaited spark that triggered the explosion. It explains all subsequent phenomena: the beginning of Western modernity, the end of the medieval period, and indeed the beginning of modern human history altogether. This is because colonial powers projected their thought upon humanity through the force of their philosophical vision—philosophy which, after the time of al-Ghazālī, was widely condemned and abandoned by the majority of Muslims. In so doing, they relinquished this armor and lost a vital, protective weapon.

2. The conquest and colonization of the world, and the discovery of the Americas in 1492—giving rise to American sociology and the phenomenon of the cowboy and its associated philosophy.

Following the conquest of Constantinople, the Muslims lost al-Andalus, and the age of discovering new lands and Eastern colonies began. The motives behind colonialism are well-known; however, our purpose here is to highlight one of its primary justifications: the claim by

Europeans that their ancestors sought to export civilization—foremost among its elements, philosophy—to the world, under the pretense that philosophy is a purely European intellectual product.

At this point, the philosopher asks: Were all the ideas produced by Renaissance philosophers truly philosophical? Or were some of them philosophy while others were mere sophistry? What is philosophy? And what were the consequences of their philosophical legacy? So many questions remain...

3. The revolutions of the Renaissance through the reintroduction of philosophy into Europe.

Greek scientific texts and Eastern intellectual works — preserved in the libraries of the Byzantine Church in Constantinople — were transmitted to Europe, causing a shock of wonder and astonishment and stirring resentment toward the Church. Philosophy awakened minds and exposed the Church's flaws and fraudulence. Thus, the European Renaissance emerged out of the darkness of the Middle Ages in revolt against the Church's hegemony, which had prohibited enlightened scientific inquiry that conflicted with its ideology and dogma, while simultaneously

extracting wealth from the impoverished classes in the name of religion.

This led advocates of secularism to raise their heads. At the time, there was no alternative to secularism as a means of liberation from the Church's tyranny and deception, since atheism was not yet a viable option in that age.¹⁶

Yet, the philosopher may ask: Did the darkness truly lift, and was light truly revealed to the Europeans in the long run?

In reality, modernity gradually eroded religion until it extinguished it altogether, paving the way for unrestrained absurdity across all domains—religious, social, and economic. What followed was chaos, barbarism, and triviality—expressed under the name of modernity, whose ultimate outcome was a set of intellectual and behavioral patterns imposed upon humanity as if they were a cosmic law, with the economy as their foremost and most powerful manifestation.

To begin with, three major philosophical trends emerged:

¹⁶ Secularism is, at its core, a European phenomenon. It originally aimed to curtail the authority of the Pope in the Vatican, preventing him from intervening in the internal and external political affairs of European states and in the lives of their peoples. Over time, the concept of secularism took on a more defined shape and evolved into various forms—some of which were constructive, while others proved detrimental.

First: The empirical school, represented by **Francis Bacon** (d. 1626).

Second: The rationalist school, represented by the sage **René Descartes** (d. 1650).

Third: The critical school, represented by **Immanuel Kant** (d. 1804), who sought to reconcile the two preceding approaches.

At this point, the Church, having become entrenched in the emotional consciousness of the people, was laid bare by the light of reason. It, too, began to search for alternatives to ensure its survival. The Church decided to appease the European populace from within and to ingratiate itself with the emigrants to the newly discovered lands—those who had fled its authority and that of the aristocratic class. It did so by deploying its emissaries under the guise of volunteer services, nursing, and expressing zeal on behalf of the settlers against the indigenous populations, even blessing their actions.

Naturally, the migrants—having found untamed lands—transformed into feudal lords, much like the aristocracy, and to a lesser extent, the bourgeoisie. It was only logical that the Church would seek to curry favor with these migrants, who had once been impoverished, laboring, and ignorant classes—easily swayed and directed.

All of these factors, coupled with ecclesiastical support, produced a new social pattern in the world, unlike any that preceded it. In sociology, it became known as “**American Sociology**”—a model whose underlying philosophy held that **might makes right**, and that **the end justifies the means**. As a result, feudalism, land seizure, banditry, bloodshed, and the extermination of indigenous peoples became widespread and normalized.

This phenomenon can be succinctly described as “**the philosophy of the cowboy**”—a worldview that would later leave a profound impact on the future of the entire world.

Following the aforementioned philosophical trends, a new school of thought emerged in Europe, advocated by Schopenhauer (d. 1860):

Fourth: The irrationalist school. Its core idea is that the **will** gives rise to **absolute truth**, and that this absolute truth has no connection whatsoever to **reason**. Friedrich Nietzsche pursued Schopenhauer’s thought, hybridizing it with the philosophies of Immanuel Kant and Charles Darwin, and thus produced a novel intellectual current known as **Nietzschean materialism**.

Before long, a geopolitical axis in Europe embraced and reinforced this school of thought, even asserting

that the will alone generates absolute truth—dismissing reason entirely.

Prominent figures of this axis, such as **Adolf Hitler (d. 1945)** and **Benito Mussolini (d. 1945)**, actively promoted this new philosophy, rallied support for it, and incited hostility against its opponents. They placed it on their political agenda and pledged to preserve it through the most powerful weaponry of their era.

Meanwhile, the opposing axis in Europe and beyond promoted its own philosophical ideology, mobilizing masses in preparation for direct confrontation. As ideological escalation intensified, both camps sought to entrench and crystallize their doctrines into comprehensive systems—indeed, global paradigms—presented as if they were divine decrees or manifestations of cosmic fate.

This irrationalist current gave rise to several schools, including:

- **Existentialism**
- **Heideggerianism**
- **Phenomenology**, which focuses on the study of consciousness in its relation to phenomena—how it perceives them and how they appear in one’s experience
- Alongside **Nietzschean materialism**

A new philosophical trend also emerged in Europe and its cultural extensions, pioneered by John Toland (d. 1722):

Fifth: The Materialist School.

This school gained strength through the contributions of thinkers such as **David Hartley** (d. 1757), **Joseph Priestley** (d. 1804), **Julien Offray de La Mettrie** (d. 1751), **Denis Diderot** (d. 1784), **Claude Adrien Helvétius** (d. 1771), **Jean le Rond d'Alembert** (d. 1783), **Baron d'Holbach** (d. 1789), and others.

The essence of materialist philosophy is the belief that **everything that exists is physical**. The universe, according to this view, is composed of an infinite number of aggregated atoms, and its decay occurs through their disintegration. This school became known as **mechanistic materialism**, which posits a **monistic ontology** of material existence—that being is fundamentally one and purely material¹⁷.

Proponents of this view argued that God's omnipresence can only be conceived if His existence is understood in material terms. From this school

¹⁷ "The concept of *wahdat al-wujūd* (the unity of being) has multiple formulations among philosophers, and it is often confused with other notions—particularly with *wahdat al-shuhūd* (the unity of witness). It is essential for the philosopher to understand these terms clearly and to distinguish between their different modalities."

emerged **rational materialists**, who maintained that the world is governed by a rational necessity.

Some European adherents of mechanistic materialism claimed that the human being is merely a machine, differing from animals in degree but not in kind. As a result, those who adopted this philosophy treated the human being as a machine devoid of emotions or intrinsic value.

On the metaphysical level, this view reduced man to a mechanistic entity.

On the ethical level, it claimed that the criterion of goodness is **what produces pleasure**, while the criterion of evil is **what causes pain**. Hence, if an immoral act (such as vice) yields pleasure, then—under this philosophy—it is considered good.

This school of thought gave birth to a new philosophy: **dialectical materialism**, which represents the **left-wing interpretation of Hegelian philosophy**, whereas **idealism** represents its right-wing counterpart.

Karl Marx (d. 1883) and **Friedrich Engels** (d. 1895) adopted Hegel's dialectical model and reformulated it—not as the evolution of ideas, but as the evolution of **matter**. In their framework, truth emerges from a dialectical conflict between two opposing material conditions (thesis and antithesis), producing a new

synthesis. This synthesis then enters into contradiction with its own antithesis, and the process continues toward an absolute endpoint.¹⁸

Later, this theory was developed by the Russian **Mikhail Kalinin**¹⁹ and the Chinese **Mao Zedong**,²⁰ who transformed it into a comprehensive system of **historical dialectical materialism**. They began applying it to the social, historical, and economic realities of the world.

According to this logic:

- The **conflict between primitive communism and slave-based communism** (two opposing forms) produced a **feudal society** as a synthesis.
- Then, the **feudal society** entered into conflict with **capitalism**, generating a **socialist society**.
- This dialectical process continued until it culminated in the **communist society**, which was imposed as an inevitable historical outcome.

In this system, **the individual has no identity and no free will**.

Eventually, a revolutionary global pole emerged, calling for **socialism**—an ideology born from the idea

¹⁸ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels had adopted Hegelianism, but only after "bringing it down from heaven to earth," as they put it—by which they meant abandoning metaphysical inquiry.

¹⁹ One of the most prominent Soviet politicians of the revolutionary era, died in 1946.

²⁰ Founder of the Republic of China and founder of the Maoist trend in communist theory. Died 1976.

of the **proletariat**, wherein the working and impoverished classes take control over political and economic power. This stood in opposition to **capitalism**, the other global pole theorized by **François Quesnay** (d. 1774), and which evolved over time into a doctrine affirming **private ownership and feudal aristocracy**.

Thus, Europe became a vast arena in which **all forms of conflict converged**—gathering both aligned and opposing forces. In addition to the ancient theological disputes over the nature of Christ and the consequences of Aryan and Germanic migrations into Europe (which brought about phenomena such as dynastic wars that resembled chess games of advance, retreat, victory, and defeat), a new wave of **complex ideological, intellectual, methodological, political, and military conflicts** arose. Some of these intersected, while others diverged.

At this point, **Europe had transformed into an active warehouse** filled with highly volatile materials and ideological explosives.

And here, the philosopher must ask:

Who will strike the spark? From where will it come? When? Why? What will its form be? What will be its scale? And if it comes, what will its

consequences and results be? What will the world become—and what has it been?

Such questions are only natural. They emerge as a result of deep contemplation—and the intoxication of illusion is dispelled.

And this... was the next explosion.

4) The First World War (1914–1918) and the Second World War (1939–1945).

The spark emerged quietly from beneath the ashes, and evil bared its teeth. War broke out, and was soon followed by its twin. When both had run their course, the victor imposed its own philosophy and ideology upon the vanquished. Among the victors' allies, the most powerful assumed leadership, and its allies had no choice but to align themselves with its theories and worldview. The Western colonial powers acknowledged the United States as the leading force—a global, imperial, and capitalist superpower, now positioned as a global pole in opposition to another.

This marked the beginning of a new era in human history: **the postmodern era**, which became the prevailing global order, imposed upon the entire world as though it were the very logic of nature, divine law, or an immutable cosmic order.²¹

21 Hans Küng dated postmodernism to 1918, the end of World War I.

As for the Eastern half of the world, it took its own stance, and the globe was effectively divided between two major, opposing poles: **the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact**, versus **the United States and NATO**. Each camp sought to draw the world into its orbit. Nations aligned themselves with one pole or the other—sometimes out of philosophical conviction, but often out of self-interest.

A bloc was formed, known as the **Non-Aligned Movement**, claiming neutrality between the two superpowers. Yet in reality, this movement was largely symbolic, and it quietly dissolved within a few decades—especially after the collapse of the Eastern bloc, namely the **Soviet Union in 1990**. The Western bloc persisted for several more decades, giving rise to the next global transformation:

5) Globalization and the Imposition of World Dominance.

That is: the molding of humanity according to the image of the powerful, and the imposition of its philosophy and worldview upon all realms of human life—cultural, political, economic, social, and beyond. These philosophies were framed as **values**, though values, in this schema, are merely instruments serving explicit or implicit ends. They are subject to the variables of time and place. According to some

Western philosophers, values are **subjective**, meaning that humans can create and define them.

This stands in stark contrast to **Plato**, who held that values are **objective**, possessing a real existence beyond the mind—not merely mental constructs.

The **philosophy of history** seeks to link historical events with their underlying causes. It endeavors to interpret history philosophically, so that we may perceive what lies beyond its visible outlines across the long arc of time and space. This entire presentation has aimed to demonstrate the **impact of philosophy on humanity**—its direct presence in our lives. Even if human beings abandon philosophy, philosophy will not abandon them. It is embedded in the core of human existence and experience; it is the driving force of civilization.

A nation that disregards philosophy, or fails to appreciate its worth, is a nation devoid of significance or genuine presence among the nations.

Yet, as we have seen, philosophy has decayed among many modern and contemporary philosophers. This is because they abandoned **divine science** (al-‘ilm al-ilāhī), for **metaphysics** is the very soul of philosophy—without it, philosophy dies. Moreover, some thinkers adulterated their philosophical inquiry with **sophistry**—driven by vanity or madness. The

consequence has been the descent of the world into its current state: a reality in which the powerful impose their values as if they were universal, unchangeable truths.

This state of affairs appears irreversible, unless it is undone by a **cosmic decree** or by a **third world war**. Indeed, the world today has begun to search for a new global order.

It is as though the European Renaissance never truly lifted Europe from its medieval darkness, but rather extended that darkness to the rest of the world. Renaissance philosophers imagined that philosophy was merely a matter of following arbitrary paths of thought, without any guiding law. They embraced fragmentation and confusion, and deluded themselves into thinking they could alter divine laws and the natural order.

As **Friedrich Nietzsche** declared: “We are the ones who killed God.” At best, this could be interpreted to mean that God created the world and then withdrew from it, leaving its governance to humankind—that man is capable of changing divine laws and natural norms.

Nietzsche also **incited rebellion against moral values**, claiming that ethics were invented by the herd—the masses—as a way to restrain the authority

of the noble class. He thus **declared war on morality**, and advocated for **decadence**, so that man might live without ethical constraints.

But the **true philosopher** knows that this is error and corruption, and that **philosophy is innocent of such distortions**. To project such thought onto humanity is a gross fallacy, one that no **epistemology** would recognize.

Yet the **ignorant**, encountering such immoral figures posing as philosophers, will curse philosophy itself—believing it to be synonymous with **atheism, blasphemy**, and the stripping of both individual and society from all values.

At this point, the philosopher must ask:

What is the origin of this chaos?

How did it arise?

How did it become so entrenched?

Who is responsible for it?

How did it find a home within humanity?

What is its nature? What is its scale?

And can self-interest truly be called a “value”?

Philosophy **structures historical narrative**, breathes life into it, interprets the causes behind events, illuminates the layers of history, and determines its trajectory. Philosophy stands in judgment over history. It exposes the fabrications of some historians, their

misleading interpretations, and their feeble apologies for criminals.

While the philosophers of old sought to understand being, the philosophers of modern imperial powers have **abandoned that aim entirely**. Their objective became to **obscure the world**, to **mystify** and **reengineer** it—to reshape it in a particular mold, both in form and content, and to make their philosophy **universal**—imposing their imprint upon existence itself.

This imprint is **modernity**, in all its manifestations.

These philosophers have filled the world with **astonishment**, **confusion**, and **misery**, turning it into a **trivial and absurd** order. They, of all people, should not have been the cause of astonishment.

And so, all who failed to arm themselves with philosophy—or who forgot that, “In the beginning was philosophy”—succumbed to the conditions of modernity.

"IN THE END, AS IN THE BEGINNING, ONLY
PHILOSOPHY REMAINS – NOT AS AN ANSWER,
BUT AS THE ETERNAL IMPULSE TO QUESTION,
TO SEEK, TO BE."